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Weekly Summary

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Chilean Regime Moves to improve Its Image

President Pinochet has announced plans to return the country to civilian rule by 1985. His blueprint for a return to "normalcy," and recent reports that he is considering restricting the power of the notorious National Intelligence Directorate suggest that Pinochet has become convinced that it is time for a new image. There will be little change, however, in the present operation of the government.

Pinochet's suggested schedule for the return to civilian rule calls for the establishment in 1980 of an appointed single legislative chamber that will rule jointly with the armed forces for four or five years. In 1985 limited popular elections would be held to choose two-thirds of the delegates to a legislative assembly that would then appoint a new president. Pinochet warned that the entire plan depends on continued signs of "recuperation" from the Allende years. If the announced time frame is followed, Chile will be on a course of scheduled constitutional changes similar to plans announced by the military governments of Bolivia and Peru.

Pinochet has been under considerable pressure to do something about Chile's human rights image. Complaints by other members of the junta and the military services about the regime's vulnerability on the rights issue and about the power of the National Intelligence Directorate have in-

creased in recent months. Many senior officers [redacted] have told Pinochet that subversion is under control and that the state of siege should be lifted and the directorate's arrest power terminated. 1.5G

The results of a surprise visit by Supreme Court President Eyzaguirre last month to a detention center operated by the directorate may have been a factor in Pinochet's decision to announce the planned constitutional change. The court president reported his discovery of severely abused prisoners to Pinochet and said he was going to order the court to investigate the directorate's activities. Eyzaguirre sent copies of his report to the other junta members—the navy and air force chiefs—who have long advocated a move toward civilian rule.

Pinochet's outlook continues to be heavily influenced by the chaos of the Allende years and he probably believes it is premature to curtail the intelligence directorate. He also clearly wants to put off a return to civilian rule as long as possible. The fact that political normalization will be supervised closely by the armed forces probably increased his willingness to make the election announcement. An added inducement, of course, is the announcement's expected beneficial effects on the government's popular support as well as its human rights image. [redacted]

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